**Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945–52**

After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the United States led the Allies in the occupation and rehabilitation of the Japanese state. Between 1945 and 1952, the U.S. occupying forces, led by General Douglas A. MacArthur, enacted widespread military, political, economic, and social reforms.

**Allied Occupation in Japan after WWII**

The groundwork for the Allied occupation of a defeated Japan was laid during the war. In a [series of wartime conferences](http://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/war-time-conferences), the leaders of the Allied powers of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the Republic of China, and the United States discussed how to disarm Japan, deal with its colonies (especially Korea and Taiwan), stabilize the Japanese economy, and prevent the remilitarization of the state in the future. In the [Potsdam Declaration](http://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/potsdam-conf), they called for Japan’s unconditional surrender; by August of 1945, that objective had been achieved.

In September, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur took charge of the Supreme Command of Allied Powers (SCAP) and began the work of rebuilding Japan. Although Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of China had an advisory role as part of an “Allied Council,” MacArthur had the final authority to make all decisions. The occupation of Japan can be divided into three phases: the initial effort to punish and reform Japan, the work to revive the Japanese economy, and the conclusion of a formal peace treaty and alliance.

The first phase, roughly from the end of the war in 1945 through 1947, involved the most fundamental changes for the Japanese Government and society. The Allies punished Japan for its past militarism and expansion by convening war crimes trials in Tokyo. At the same time, SCAP dismantled the Japanese army and banned former military officers from taking roles of political leadership in the new government. In the economic field, SCAP introduced land reform, designed to benefit the majority tenant farmers and reduce the power of rich landowners, many of whom had advocated for war and supported Japanese expansionism in the 1930s. MacArthur also tried to break up the large Japanese business conglomerates, or zaibatsu, as part of the effort to transform the economy into a free market capitalist system. In 1947, Allied advisors essentially dictated a new constitution to Japan’s leaders. Some of the most profound changes in the document included downgrading the emperor’s status to that of a figurehead without political control and placing more power in the parliamentary system, promoting greater rights and privileges for women, and renouncing the right to wage war, which involved eliminating all non-defensive armed forces.

**General MacArthur and Japanese Emperor Hirohito**